

OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE MINUTES
Regular Meeting
August 19, 2010
Newington Town Hall
7:00 P.M.

I. Roll Call

The following members were present: Chairman Bowen, Mrs. Conway, Ms. Wojtowicz, Mr. Block, Mr. Pappa, Mrs. Anest, Mr. Marcinczyk, Mrs. Nasinnyk, Mr. Bottalico and Mr. Nagel. Also present: Town Planner Edmund Meehan.

II. Minutes

May 6, 2010 Regular Meeting - Minutes were approved. Mr. Pappa, Mr. Block and Mrs. Nasinnyk abstained, not present.

III. Public Participation

None

IV. New Business – Subcommittee Reports

A. Land Trust Organization

Carol Wojtowicz reported the Trust has been formed and a small donation received.

Committee members recommended “getting the word out” that a Land Trust has been formed. Ed Meehan suggested NCTV and Town Website “Community Links” as possible ways to inform the public.

Carol Wojtowicz said they have additional steps to complete and will have more to report at the Committee’s next meeting.

B. Open Space Grants and Funding Sources

Ed Meehan reported that the next round of DEP Land and Water Conservation grants may be announced in late fall 2010 for January or February 2011 application submission. Towns and land trusts are eligible to apply but must have candidate properties that meet DEP criteria, get appraisals and have agreement with owner for possible purchase. Grant awards are usually announced in late May.

C. Potential Open Space Properties Inventory

Ed Meehan reported on the Open Space inventory analysis and mapping for 317 acres of non-residential parcels and 332 acres of residential parcels. This inventory uses the data collected for the 2020 POCD, vacant property and natural resources mapping (See attached).

The acreage evaluated shows properties larger than 2 acres in size. The inventory map provides: ownership, zone classification, parcel size, and environmental features for 29 residential and 33 non-residential vacant properties. Mr. Meehan cautioned that the identified environmental limitations do not mean that the entire property is restricted. This is a “first cut” and further review of specific properties should be conducted to identify areas of limitation. The Committee or the Land Trust might use this information to set priorities for protecting properties based on resource protection and to implement the open space component of the 2020 POCD.

Chairman Bowen suggested the Committee consider breaking the town down into 5 or 6 smaller study areas for members to collect more detailed information. Mr. Meehan recommended that the Committee start with a few priority parcels that it wants to protect for open space preservation. The rationale for identifying these priorities should be resource protection and/or their location that furthers the strategies of the 2020 POCD Open Space component. The “economic cost” of protecting these priorities, taking them off the tax roll, would be a consideration of the Town Council. For example, the “cost: benefit” of a particular potential open space parcel would be important for the Town Council to know prior to committing Town acquisition funds.

Chairman Bowen urged the Committee to first get the 5 or 6 priority open space parcels identified. A small subcommittee consisting of Mr. Bowen, Mrs. Conway, Mr. Pappa, Mr. Block and Mrs. Wojtowicz will work on identifying priority parcels.

Ed Meehan will work on GIS map layers to show the Committee how the composite of potential open spaces is created.

V. Old Business

A. Committee Meeting Schedule

By consensus the Committee agreed that its meeting schedule would be changed to the Third Thursday of each month at 5:30 p.m., except for September, when the meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 15th at 5:30 p.m. Staff will notify the Town Clerk of the meeting schedule and post on Town website.

B. Cedar Mountain Real Estate Strategy (Deferred to end of meeting)

Mr. Nagel requested that the Committee request from the Town Attorney an opinion on going into executive sessions. Mr. Nagel wanted it clarified that an advisory Committee appointed by the Town Council can go into executive session. Mr. Bowen responded that he believed the Committee is authorized to hold executive sessions for real estate and to be sure, a request would be sent to Town Attorney, Ben Ancona for his opinion.

VI. Public Participation

None

VII. Remarks by Committee Members

A. TPZ Commissioner Pane's Comments

By consensus, the Committee supported Chairman Bowen's attendance at the TPZ's August 25, 2100 meeting to address Mr. Pane's remarks.

B. Balf – Town Committee – Question of status of Committee's role and purpose.

Mike Fox was in the audience and explained that this committee was originally created to address Balf Company blasting and dust problems and evolved over time into the Environmental Quality Commission.

Kris Nasinnyk will look into the status of the Balf – Town Committee and report back at the next meeting.

VIII. Cedar Mountain Real Estate Strategy

Mr. Block moved that the Committee go into executive session to discuss real estate strategy regarding Cedar Mountain open space properties. Seconded by Ms. Wojtowicz and approved.

Present at Executive Session were Committee members and the Town Planner. The session began at 8:05 p.m. and ended at 8:20 p.m.

IX. Additional Remarks by Commissioners

Mrs. Conway remarked about the Balf Company selective tree cutting application that was withdrawn and not presented to the Inland Wetlands Agency. The question asked was about how the trees were selected and if a "pattern" for removal was discussed with Town Staff. Mr. Meehan responded that he and the Town Engineer walked the property and did not see a cutting "pattern." The forestry company that submitted the application was advised that "Old Highway" was a greenway and a natural buffer would be appropriate.

X. Adjournment

Mr. Block moved to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Pappa and approved. The meeting ended at 8:27 p.m.

Submitted,

Edmund J. Meehan
Town Planner

Town Clerk
Town Website